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AUTHOR Gibbs, Gordon L.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) Summer Reading Program is a parent-administered program designed to help children maintain the reading skills that they acquired in kindergarten through participation in a communication skills program. The subjects of the experimental group were 389 kindergarten students in four California school districts. The control group consisted of 144 kindergarten students from schools in these same districts. Using storybooks, practice exercises, and animal posters, parents of children in the experimental group worked with their children in practicing the reading skills they had acquired. Preprogram and postprogram performance measures were obtained for both the treatment and control groups. The data indicated that the scores of students who received the program deteriorated less than those of students who did not receive the program. (TS)

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TITLE: 1970 TRYOUT OF THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM: PRELIMINARY REPORT

AUTHOR: Gordon L. Gibbs, Paul E. Resta, and Nancy Yaman

ABSTRACT

This is a report of the preliminary results of the 1970 tryout of the Summer Reading Program. Based upon an analysis of student participants' scores on a pre- and posttest, the report includes tables and descriptions pertinent to the following topics:

1. Program description
2. Purpose of the tryout
3. Tryout procedures
4. Description of the sample
5. Student performance

The program was administered to 389 kindergarten pupils in four California school districts. Pre and post program performance measures were obtained for both the treatment and control groups. The data indicated that the scores of students who received the program deteriorated less than those of students who did not receive the program.

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1970 TRYOUT OF THE SUMMER READING PROGRAM:
PRELIMINARY REPORT

Program Description

The Summer Reading Program is a parent-administered program designed to help children maintain the reading skills that they acquired in kindergarten through participation in SWRL's First Year Communication Skills Program. Using storybooks, practice exercises, and animal posters, the program enables parents to work with their children in practicing the reading skills they have acquired. The program lasts for ten weeks, but only takes approximately 15 minutes per day, three days a week, to complete.

Purpose of the Tryout

The purposes of the 1970 tryout were:

1. To determine if a system of accountability significantly affects the degree of participation in the program.
2. To determine what effect the socio-economic status of participants had on their participation and performance.

Procedures

After minor revisions were made to some of the program materials, a set of self-instructional guidelines, designed to train parents in the use of the program, were developed.[1]

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[1] For a complete description of these guidelines and the results of their tryout, see TN 5-70-26, Self-Guided Training for Summer Reading Program.

A design that was consistent with the purposes of the tryout was established. In addition to a control group, two treatment groups - an accountability group and a non-accountability group - were employed. Pupils in schools representing each of three socio-economic levels were assigned to each group. These levels were based on the median family income of pupils in a school, and consisted of the following categories:

1. Low (less than $5,000)
2. Middle ($5,000 - $10,000)
3. High (more than $10,000)

A pretest was administered to all students who were selected to participate in the tryout. During the last week of school a complete set of the program materials was given to each member of the treatment groups. Included in these materials were the following items:

1. An introductory letter
2. Self-instructional parent guidelines
3. Ten storybooks (one per unit)
4. Thirty practice exercises (three per unit)
5. Ten weekly record sheets (one per unit)[2]
6. Ten animal posters (one per unit)

Each unit's materials were wrapped separately and then packaged in sets of ten to make up a complete set of program materials.

To assess the effects of a system of accountability on the continued participation of parents and their children, some of the participants

[2] Material sets containing the weekly record sheets were given only to pupils in the accountability group.

received program materials which included weekly record sheets which were in the form of postage-paid mailers which were to be returned to SWRL after the completion of each unit's activities. For each child who had received a set of the program materials containing the weekly record sheets, a tally was made of the number that were returned. Except for this device, no attempt was made to monitor the program during the course of the tryout.

During the first week of the fall semester, children who had received a set of the program materials, as well as those in the control group, were again tested, using the same test that had been used in the spring. In an attempt to determine parent reaction to and participation in the program, a questionnaire was sent to the parents of all children who had received a set of the program materials. However, only a small percentage of these questionnaires had been returned at the time this document was prepared. As a consequence, the results of this questionnaire are not reported here, but will be included in a final report of the tryout.

Sample

A total of 389 kindergarten students in four California school districts - Fowler, Fresno, San Diego, and Torrance - received a set of the Summer Reading Program materials. The control group consisted of 144 kindergarten students from schools in these same four districts. All children had completed at least eight units of the First Year Communication Skills Program. However, due primarily to the lack of sufficient time to complete the testing, as well as due to the effects

of student attrition over the summer, only 226 of the students in the treatment group received both the pre- and posttest. The analysis is based, therefore, on the performance of these 226 participants and the control group.

The treatment group was further divided into two subgroups. An accountability group consisting of 95 children who received both the pre- and posttest, and whose program materials contained the returnable weekly record sheet; and a non-accountability group of 131 children who received both tests, but whose materials did not contain the weekly record sheets. The entire sample was stratified across groups on the basis of median family income as determined by the best figure available from the participating school districts.

Findings

The results of the pre- and posttest, presented by socio-economic strata and treatment group, appear in Table 1. Looking first at the row labeled ALL, the test scores of children who received the program materials deteriorated by a smaller amount than the test scores of children in the control group. Also of interest is the fact that the standard deviation of scores increased by more than a point in the control group, but by only six tenths of a point in each of the treatment groups.

The test scores of children in the control and non-accountability groups from schools in which the median family income was classified as LOW decreased by 3.5 and 4.0 points respectively, but by only .7 points for children in the accountability group in the same stratum. Again, the standard deviation of the scores increased in each group.

Table 1. Summer Reading Program total scores on pre- and posttests by treatment group and median family income

		GROUP					
		Control		Acct.		Non-Acct.	
		pre	post	pre	post	pre	post
High	N	52		50		73	
	$\bar{X}$	31.0	27.1	37.3	35.6	29.1	31.0
	SD	6.9	7.9	2.6	4.2	6.8	7.1
Middle	N	50		32		47	
	$\bar{X}$	32.2	32.5	33.4	33.8	33.0	30.9
	SD	5.2	5.8	5.5	6.0	6.5	7.0
Low	N	42		13		11	
	$\bar{X}$	33.3	29.8	29.2	28.5	20.5	16.5
	SD	5.4	6.5	6.6	7.6	7.3	6.8
All	N	144		95		131	
	$\bar{X}$	32.5	29.8	34.9	34.0	29.8	29.7
	SD	6.0	7.1	5.2	5.8	7.5	8.1

An increase in the test scores of children in the control and accountability groups from schools in which the median family income fell into the MIDDLE category can be observed, while a decrease of more than two points can be observed in the test scores of children in the non-accountability group in the same stratum.

Children's test scores decreased by 1.7 points in the accountability group, increased by 1.9 points in the non-accountability group, and decreased by 3.9 points in the control group within the stratum in which the median family income was classified as HIGH. As in the other strata, the standard deviation of the test scores increased in each case.

Table 2 presents the pre- and posttest scores of children in the accountability group, broken down by the number of weekly record sheets that were returned. An examination of this data reveals that children's test scores increased in those instances in which their parents returned more than five weekly record sheets, while test scores decreased for children whose parents returned five or less weekly record sheets. However, the pretest scores of children in the former instance were higher than those of children in the latter instance.

Discussion

The fact that the test scores of children in both treatment groups decreased by a smaller amount than those of children in the control group suggests that the children who received the program materials retained more of their reading skills than children who did not receive the program. Similarly, there seems to be a direct relationship between students' performance and the degree of program participation, as

Table 2. Pretest and posttest scores of children in in the accountability group by the number of weekly record sheets returned

		WEEKLY RECORD SHEETS RETURNED		
		0	1-5	6-10
	N	30	23	42
PRETEST	$\bar{X}$	32.8	34.7	36.5
	SD	6.3	5.5	3.7
POSTTEST	$\bar{X}$	30.4	33.0	37.2
	SD	6.5	5.7	3.2

measured by the number of weekly record sheets that were returned. However, a final judgment regarding such a relationship must await the return of the parent questionnaires so that a measure of participation by children in the non-accountability group can be obtained. Although final inferences regarding the effects of accountability must be based on the degree of participation, and must thus be delayed until the parent questionnaires have been returned and the data analyzed, it seems as though the weekly record sheet should be retained as an optional component.

On the basis of the data presently available, it would appear that the Summer Reading Program can help children maintain their reading skills during the summer. Moreover, other benefits that might be obtained from its use, such as improving parent-child relationships and children's attitudes toward learning to read, should be considered when evaluating the possible use of the program.